



Doctor is game for commission post

Henderson physician has the knowledge of, but not the ties to, Nevada's casino industry

By [Liz Benston](#)

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Alamo Jr.

Sun Archives

- [Dr. Tony Alamo joins Nevada Gaming Commission](#) (3-12-2008)

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The newest member of the Nevada Gaming Commission is a local physician and prominent Republican with political connections to Gov. Jim Gibbons and other power players.

And although Dr. Tony Alamo Jr.'s connections helped him secure a position on one of the state's most important regulatory bodies, his deep understanding of the gaming industry — as

well as his distance from it — make him a desirable find in a state whose success is closely entwined with that of the casinos it regulates.

“I think he’s a good choice because having that perspective on the industry is very useful,” said Las Vegas gaming attorney Jeff Silver, a former commissioner. “Most people don’t understand the technicalities and hear about things in a vacuum.”

Finding the right person for the job can be a tricky task.

More so in Nevada than in most other states, what’s good for a single industry is often good for the state as a whole. Other states with casinos view industry-friendly regulators with a critical eye, preferring outsiders with law enforcement experience, but Nevada values regulators with knowledge of the gaming industry who can appreciate its crucial role in the state’s growth and economic success.

There are pitfalls to that approach because individuals too involved in the gaming industry face potential conflicts of interest. In Nevada, businesspeople with ties to the industry have parlayed stints in public service, especially high-profile positions with the gaming regulatory bodies, into bigger careers.

That said, the Gaming Commission isn’t a juice job for Alamo, 43, a prominent doctor who will be sacrificing time — and money — at his more lucrative private practice to serve on the board.

To understand why requires some knowledge of Alamo’s father, a Cuban immigrant who got a job as a Reno dealer in the 1960s.

Tony Alamo Sr. moved his family to Las Vegas in 1974, taking a job as shift manager at Circus Circus. Years later, he ran the Desert Inn for Kirk Kerkorian and opened the billionaire’s MGM Grand. In 1995 he left to join the Monte Carlo, which opened the following year under the predecessor of Mandalay Resort Group. Alamo Sr. retired from the industry in 2005 when Mandalay was acquired by MGM Mirage.

While other kids his age were going on family vacations, Alamo Jr. wasn’t seeing much of his father, who worked through holidays and school breaks. His dad made time for his son over weekend lunches at the Pink Pony coffee shop at Circus Circus. On those lunch breaks, his father wasted little time discussing his son’s progress in school and his life’s ambitions.

“Education was very important — he pushed that,” Alamo said. “He knew that, being a physician, I could do the most good and be in control of my own destiny.”

Serving on the commission, Alamo said, is a chance to “serve a state that’s given my father enormous opportunities to better himself and to raise children to become educated professionals.” Alamo’s sister, Nancy, obtained degrees in education and psychology and is a Clark County School District administrator.

In addition to his full-time job running a medical practice in Henderson, Alamo serves as a volunteer physician for Metro Police's SWAT unit and is an organizer and director of Bank of George, a local bank formed last year. Alamo also served as a member of the Nevada State Athletic Commission for more than six years, until his term ended Oct. 31, and as chairman of that commission's medical advisory board. He also is chief of staff at St. Rose Dominican Hospitals-San Martin Campus.

"I'm lucky that I only need about 4 1/2 to five hours of sleep," he said. "But as hard as I've worked as a physician — and I've worked 36 to 48 hours straight in some cases — I will tell you my father has worked harder."

Being a member of the Athletic Commission carried the perk of watching boxing matches ringside; the Gaming Commission job — although arguably more important — isn't as much fun.

"It's not the glamour job it once was," Silver said. "The materials they have to read each month are in binders 6 to 8 inches thick and it's required reading, along with the transcripts of the Gaming Control Board meetings. The prep time is often several days of concentrated reading." That's a lot to ask, Silver says, for a part-time job paying \$40,000 a year.

"I know the enormous workload that's involved to do the kind of job I want to do," Alamo said.

It's a commitment Alamo is more than willing to make.

"I was born and raised in Nevada," Alamo said. "Giving back to the community is something you're supposed to do."